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St. Helena

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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I. General

1. The Territory of St. Helena,[1] which is administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, consists of the main island of St. Helena and two dependencies: the island of Ascension and a group of islands forming the dependency of Tristan da Cunha.

2. Situated in the South Atlantic Ocean, approximately 1,900 kilometres from Angola and 2,900 kilometres from Brazil, the Territory covers a total land area of 412 square kilometres. Ascension lies 1,200 kilometres to the north-west of St. Helena, and Tristan da Cunha and the other small islands forming that dependency are approximately 2,400 kilometres to the south of it. St. Helena, where Jamestown, the capital of the Territory, is located, is the largest island, with an area of 122 square kilometres. It has a tropical climate tempered by trade winds which blow throughout the year.

3. According to the most recent information provided by the administering Power, the population of St. Helena, excluding its dependencies, was 4,964 at the end of 1997. Approximately one third reside in Jamestown.

II. Constitutional and political developments

4. Information on constitutional and political developments in St. Helena is contained in previous working papers prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2021, paras. 4-9; A/AC.109/2071, paras. 4-8). On 25 November 1997, the British Nationality (St. Helena) Bill [H.L.], to provide for the acquisition of British citizenship by persons having connections with St. Helena, as passed by the House of Lords, was introduced in the House of Commons. According to information available, the Bill did not move forward in the 1997-1998 session of the House of Commons.[2]

5. On 27 November 1997, six members of the island's legislative council began a week-long visit to London. The delegation visited the Foreign Office and the Department of International Development, to lobby for inward investment and more government financial support, but primarily for a guarantee of full citizenship rights. A special meeting of the St. Helena Business Forum was held to coincide with the visit.[3]

6. Following the visit of the delegation, it was reported that Mr. Tony Lloyd, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, had agreed that 30 people from St. Helena could seek employment in the United Kingdom every year.[4]

7. In early February 1998, the Foreign Office concluded its review of dependent territories, after which a one-day conference was held on 4 February with territory delegates. At the conference, councillors from St. Helena made renewed appeals for rights to settle and work in the United Kingdom.[5]

8. The International Development Minister of the administering Power, in line with the Power's stated commitment to provide aid to the island, is scheduled to visit St. Helena in 1998.[6]

III. Economic conditions

A. General

9. St. Helena possesses few natural resources. Agriculture, largely of a subsistence nature, is the main economic activity. Food production is insufficient to supply the island's needs and this, together with the lack of manufacturing industries, results in the importation of the vast majority of its requirements. St. Helena is an aid-dependent economy, relying upon resources from the United Kingdom for approximately 30 per cent of its 1997-1998 public sector recurrent budget. Virtually all of St. Helena's capital investment and the majority of the technical cooperation it receives is funded by the United Kingdom's Overseas Development Administration (ODA), now known as the Department for International Development, as well as the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The cost of living in St. Helena is higher than in the United Kingdom, owing to costs related to the remoteness of the island. The retail price index in February 1998 was 109.62 (base year November 1994 = 100), compared with 105.22 in February 1996.

B. Public finance

10. The main items of estimated revenue, including British Government grant-in-aid, and expenditure for the period from 1995 to 1997, were as shown in table 1.

11. Information on taxes is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2021, para. 12).

12. The Territory's statement of assets and liabilities as at 31 March 1997 is as shown in table 2.

Table 1
Revenues and expenditure, 1995-1997[a]
(Thousands of St. Helena pounds)[b]

	1995/1996	1996/1997
Revenues		
Direct taxes	759.5	824.7
Indirect taxes	1 164.4	1 304.8
Fines, fees and charges	189.6	299.5
Government rents and hires	131.7	86.9
Earnings of the Government	164.2	207.5
Treasury receipts	1 746.2	1 393.6
Other	2 743.4	2 727.1
Total ordinary revenue	6 899.0	6 844.1
Grant-in-aid	3 560.0	3 191.0
Total (ordinary revenue + grant-in-aid)	**10 459.0**	**10 035.1**
Expenditures		
Government	1 336.1	1 568.6
Finance and development	822.3	646.1
Pensions and gratuities	295.3	380.4
Public education	1 207.8	1 298.8
Public health	1 362.5	1 486.6
Social services	1 246.1	1 484.5
Agriculture and forestry	836.6	935.0
Public works	3 013.4	1 985.0
Public debt	289.3	250.0
Other	49.4	—
Total	**10 458.8**	**10 035.3**

[a] Actual numbers may vary due to rounding.

[b] The local currency is the St. Helena pound, which is equivalent to the United Kingdom pound sterling. Both St. Helena currency notes, introduced in 1976, and the United Kingdom pound sterling are legal tender.

C. Development projects

13. Information on development projects in St. Helena, including the project implemented by UNDP, is contained in previous working papers prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2021, paras. 14-18; A/AC.109/2043, paras. 10-11). Estimated development aid expenditure for the period from 1995 to 1997 is shown in table 3.

14. UNDP's second country programme for St. Helena (1993-1996) focused on developing national capacities in two areas: (a) sustainable livelihoods; and (b) ensuring social protection throughout the transition from an aid-dependent economy dominated by the public sector to a self-financing economy, in which the private sector has an expanded role. During the course of the second country programme, a livestock project, executed by the Government, was designed to support the island's livestock production sector. In addition, a preparatory assistance project on the development of tourism, executed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), was initiated in order to develop a project to provide wide-ranging support to the development of the island's fledgling tourism industry. Finally, a project on the implementation of a social security scheme, executed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), was established to design both a national, contribution-based social security scheme and the associated institutional framework to provide benefits and services to the population of St. Helena. This last project has been postponed while the Government considers whether and how to undertake the long-term financial commitment that the scheme would entail.

15. In formulating the UNDP 1997-1999 country cooperation framework (CCF) for St. Helena, it was agreed that a focus on employment and sustainable livelihoods would present the best prospect for the efficient use of UNDP resources. The emphasis will be on activities in private sector development, with special emphasis on enterprises linked to tourism. Implementation of the programme will be organized into two umbrella projects, namely, (a) tourism development and (b) technical assistance and training. Both projects will contain components that specifically address the special circumstances of women and other vulnerable populations. The projects will be executed by the Government; however, appropriate budget lines will be implemented by bodies such as WTO and ILO.

D. Agriculture, land tenure and livestock

16. Information on agriculture, land tenure and livestock is provided in a previous working paper (A/AC.109/2021, paras. 19-28).

17. Only small quantities of forestry and agricultural produce are exported from St. Helena. During 1997/98, 1.77 cubic metres of treated pine were exported to Ascension and

Table 2
Statement of assets and liabilities as at March 1997
(St. Helena pounds)

Liabilities		*Assets*	
Deposits	1 245 740	Cash held locally and by Crown Agents, London	3 462 729
Special Funds			
Savings bank	11 705 608	Savings bank	10 793 229
Other funds	369 273	Other funds	1 811 293
Consolidated fund	3 302 521	Development fund	130 504
Trust funds	24 866	Advances	450 253
Total	**16 648 008**		**16 648 008**

Table 3
Estimated development aid expenditure, 1995-1997
(Thousands of St. Helena pounds)

	Approved total grant		*Estimated expenditures*	
Projects	*1995/96*	*1996/97*	*1995/96*	*1996/97*
Agriculture and forestry	1 452.7	1 106.0	152.0	59.7
Public utilities	1 847.8	158.0	246.4	100.0
Social and administrative services	3 319.0	80.0	64.5	77.0
Fisheries	283.3	30.0	36.0	30.0
Administrative and misc. services	50.0	2 375.0	50.0	444.1
Total	**6 952.8**	**3 749.0**	**548.9**	**710.8**

Table 4
Local fish sales and exports

	Local sales		*Exports*	
	Tons	*Value (pounds sterling)*	*Tons*	*Value (pounds sterling)*
1989/90	109.80	121 522	154.54	128 124
1990/91	83.21	108 406	154.53	128 124
1991/92	88.91	118 782	26.66	38 399
1992/93	69.66	108 364	87.06	115 056
1993/94	68.93	107 516	168.85	189 593
1994/95	70.73	108 950	150.35	178 447
1995/96	162.48	123 034	199.95	276 922
1996/97	238.71	324 705	136.03	213 066
1997/98	103.03	97 697	301.30	204 897

1,200 kilogrammes of coffee were exported to the United Kingdom.

18. The Agriculture and Forestry Department provides support to smallholder producers, including agricultural loans, through a revolving credit fund, which provided loans totalling £4,659 in 1997/98.

19. In 1992, an agricultural water subsidy programme was introduced to reduce the impact on farmers of a considerable increase in the prices charged by the Government. During 1997/98, £11,136 was spent on water subsidy, representing about 49,217 cubic metres of water used for irrigation.

20. The number of employees involved in agricultural and livestock services totalled 40, and the estimated expenditure during 1997/98 was £934,900.

21. St. Helena has an environmental conservation programme aimed at conserving endangered endemic species and diversity of habitats. The endemic plants that are unique to St. Helena form an important part of the Territory's heritage. Concerted efforts are being made to ensure their survival and conservation. From 1 April 1997 to 31 March 1998, 8,834 of the various endemic plants were planted on the island.

E. Fisheries

22. Information on fisheries is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2021, paras. 29-33).

23. Employees at the St. Helena Fisheries Corporation during the year under review consisted of 18 workers, excluding fishermen.

24. Local fish sales and export statistics from 1989 to 1998 are shown in table 4.

25. During the year under review, the St. Helena Fisheries Corporation Marketing and Export Support Project (Project 366), funded by ODA, was completed. This project involved upgrading of processing areas, port harvest support and overseas training of managerial staff.

F. Industries

26. There is no large-scale industry on St. Helena. All crafts are practised on a cottage-industry basis, with technical, financial and marketing facilities provided by the Government through the St. Helena Development Agency, established in 1995.

G. Transport, communications and utilities

27. Information on transport, communications and utilities is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2021, paras. 35-37). The island has over 100 kilometres of surfaced roads. During the period under review, the primary effort was on the maintenance of the existing road network.

28. A total of 367,000 cubic metres of treated water was supplied for domestic, commercial and agricultural purposes, from 1 April 1997 to 31 March 1998.

29. Electricity for the Territory is supplied by the Energy Division of the Public Works and Services Department, which employed more than 288 workers in 1996/97. The Department's annual expenditure is £2.0 million, and it receives income of £1.25 million through the sale of power, water and services. Expenditure on development aid work in 1996/97 was approximately £0.4 million. In the 1997/98 financial year, a total of 6,446,710 kilowatt-hours were generated and an additional 41 consumers were connected to the island's power supply, bringing the total to 2,195.

30. It was reported in February 1998 that the Foreign Office of the administering Power has sanctioned a study into transport links to the island, including an examination of the benefits of its own airport. It was also reported that the Foreign Office is negotiating with the United States of America to allow Ascension to be opened up to civilian flights for the first time, in addition to examining the possibility of increasing the frequency of shipping to the island. Foreign Office Ministers will put their proposals for the airport feasibility study to a delegation from St. Helena, which is scheduled to visit London in June 1998.[7]

H. Banking and credit

31. Information on banking and credit is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2021, paras. 38-39). Local currency in circulation as at 31 March 1996 was £2,975,030, comprising £2,600,970 in notes and £374,060 in coins. No additional information for the year under review has been received by the Secretariat.

I. International trade

32. St. Helena's main imports are food products and tobacco, motor spirits and fuel oil, animal feed, building

materials, motor vehicles, machinery and spare parts. Its only exports are fish, handicrafts and coffee. Its main trading partners remain the United Kingdom and South Africa. Others include Brazil and Ascension.

IV. Social conditions

33. Information on social conditions in the Territory is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2021, paras. 41-53). Unemployment was reported to be at about 18 per cent during the year under review. According to the administering Power, at the end of March 1998, there were 118 men and women, aged between 18 and 60, on community employment, and a further 180 men and 136 women were registered as unemployed.

34. According to the administering Power, recurrent public health expenditure in 1997/98 was £1,646,196. There is one general hospital in Jamestown and six rural health clinics on the island.

35. At the end of March 1998, 505 needy people were receiving income-related benefits, at weekly rates varying from £18.95 to £45.00. In addition, unemployment allowance was paid to 316 people, at rates varying from £12.80 to £40.00 per week.

36. There are 12 public schools in the Territory. In the year under review, there were 123 teachers, of which 119 work full-time and 4 part-time. Total expenditure by the Education Department in 1997/98 is estimated to be £1,338,800, which is approximately 12.7 per cent of the total government expenditure.

V. Dependencies of St. Helena

A. Tristan da Cunha[8]

1. General

37. General information on geographic features and climate of Tristan da Cunha is contained in paragraphs 1-2 of this working paper. Excluding expatriates, there were 286 islanders resident on Tristan as at December 1996.

2. Constitutional and political developments

38. Information on constitutional and political developments in Tristan da Cunha is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2043, paras 32-33). It was reported in December 1997 that Mr. Tony Lloyd, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, agreed that 5 people from the dependency could seek employment in the United Kingdom every year.[9]

3. Economic conditions

39. Information on economic conditions in Tristan da Cunha is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2043, paras 34-36). The 1996 budget estimates revenue at £460,022 and expenditure at £337,844. As of 31 December 1996, deposits at the local Post Office Savings Bank amounted to £110,120.98, compared with £229,845 in June 1995.

4. Social conditions

40. Information on social conditions in Tristan da Cunha is contained in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2043, paras 37-39). In the year under review, one islander took advantage of government loans to build a house. The medical budget for July-December 1996 was £44,000. The budget of the Education Department for July-December 1996 was £21,000.

B. Ascension

41. Information on the island of Ascension for the period ending in 1988 is contained in a previous working paper on St. Helena prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/1071, paras. 119-129). No further substantive information has been received by the Secretariat since that time.

VI. Future status of the Territory

42. At the 6th meeting of the Fourth Committee on 10 October, the representative of the United Kingdom restated the position of the administering Power (see A/C.4/52/SR.6). At the 9th meeting of the Committee, during the consideration of proposals relating to specific Territories, the United Kingdom orally proposed amendments to section IX (on St. Helena) of the omnibus draft resolution B contained in document A/52/23 (Part VI), chapter X, para. 20. The representative of the United Kingdom proposed that, in the sixth preambular paragraph, the word "rising" before the word "unemployment" be deleted and the words "and the joint action of the administering Power and the territorial Government to deal with it" added at the end of the paragraph. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted the

oral amendments to section IX of draft resolution B without a vote; the draft resolution as a whole was adopted by the Fourth Committee at its 11th meeting on 4 November 1997.

43. On 10 December 1997, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 52/77, a consolidated resolution on 12 Non-Self-Governing Territories, section IX of which was specifically devoted to St. Helena.

44. On 4 February 1998, the Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, Mr. Robin Cook, in a speech before the Dependent Territories Association in London, announced that in his first months as Foreign Secretary, he had set in hand a review of the United Kingdom's stewardship of the Dependent Territories. A summary of the principles and key issues contained in the proposals to "modernize" the United Kingdom's relations with the Territories is contained in document A/AC.109/2102, paras. 70-81.

45. At the same meeting, in response to the speech made by the Foreign Secretary, a member of the Executive Council of St. Helena, Mr. Eric George, emphasized the need to have the Territory's citizenship rights restored as soon as possible, as a step towards a better future for St. Helena. However, he noted that, in order to obtain a permanent and lasting solution in the long term that would benefit both St. Helena and the United Kingdom, the constitutional relationship between the two had to be considered. St. Helena wished to give greater responsibility to the elected members of the Territory's legislature. St. Helena would be seeking to move into the new century with a constitution that would allow them to develop their territory and improve their economy.

Notes

[1] Information regarding St. Helena has been derived from a report transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, on 1 June 1998.

[2] United Kingdom, House of Commons *Internet Publications*, 26 November 1997.

[3] *The Guardian*, 26 November 1997.

[4] *Press Association Newsfile*, 5 December 1997.

[5] *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 February 1998.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Information regarding Tristan da Cunha has been derived from a report transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, on 24 October 1997.

[9] *Press Association Newsfile*, 5 December 1997.